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## NOTES ON HISTORY-TEACHING

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In the process of making history a well-taught subject, a mass of direction and suggestion has been collected which is well-nigh appalling to the new teacher. Traveling the main roads with his nose buried in his Baedeker, he is in danger of missing those casual experiences which truly interpret a country. The history teacher should set up somewhere in his room an automatic reminder of the fact that a teacher with a personality is better than a library, that a sense of humor is better than a roomful of illustrative material, and that a well-placed laugh is better than a lecture. When history teachers should be enthusiastic, many are not even interested. As a result, the elaborate house of method is built on the sand. High-school students are sophisticated. They are thoroughly acquainted with the genus teacher. When they confront a new one, they expect him to go through the same old maneuvers and attack with the customary weapons. The battle is half won when they discover that he has resources of his own and that he is armed with the unexpected.

Depressing discussions of entrance examinations, the bringing to light of more or less valuable archival discoveries, the tiresome case of *High School v. College*, with the jury always divided and the judge always sleeping, syllabi, bibliographies—these things are all necessary; at least, they appear to be unavoidable. But in actual contacts with disconcerting young animals they seem very futile. For the sake of the mental “kick,” it is desirable sometimes to write and read things that are not of the historical bureaucracy—things that are just “folks.” The mind of the teacher often needs jostling more than filling.

Take the teacher who started her course in ancient history with a lecture on the neolithic and paleolithic periods. This teacher was right in so far as a reference to prehistoric ages is desirable. Moreover, there is more than one point of departure.

In my opinion, however, she selected the wrong one. For myself, "periods" are generalizations, and, at the beginning of a course, are taboo. Something common and tangible, a dog, for instance, serves my purpose better. For children know dogs. A clipping which I have in my files, a summary of a *Revue scientifique* article, says that "the first animal that we know positively to have been domesticated is the dog." The proof is found in the "kitchen-middens," the garbage piles of the prehistoric housekeepers. My clipping adds that "all the bones found in these middens are gnawed and more or less eaten" and that "dogs' bones are also very numerous among them." Here, then, is a familiar link between the remotest past and the everyday present; and the transition is easy to the domestication of animals in general, the use of fire, and other prehistoric "contributions to civilization." So, in introducing Roman history, I have read to the class a little poem, clipped from the *Century*, addressed "To a Roman Doll," found in a child's grave in Hawara, Egypt.

. . . . She held you all the ages on her breast.  
What wondrous love was hers, outlasting thrones!  
Her lullabies, outsounding battle tones,  
Outlingering *Iliads*, brought unbroken rest. . . .

If the city is engaged in paving or the county in road-building, read a description of the Roman roads. Some have appeared recently in the automobile sections of magazines. It is clear to me that dogs, dolls, and roads are better starting-points than "periods."

The stuff of history is concrete. The history-writers, not the history-makers, are the ones who have generalized it. The makers of history are doers, not philosophers. The power of generalization is valuable, of course; but it is acquired only after dealing with many concrete things. With young students, history must be concrete in order to be understandable. It must be translated, as far as possible, into the familiar terms of modern life. If the topic is Ionic columns, point to the ones on the new post-office building. If you are teaching the English Bill of Rights, show its survival in the state constitution. If war has the stage, take the class behind the scenes where wooden legs, lock-jaw serums, and groans are conspicuous among the properties. The Chinaman's

ten-cent wage, blue cotton garments, brass and bamboo currency, and rice menu explain the Exclusion Act.

History, as a record of life, is an inexhaustible mine of humor. Even the gods held their sides when Vulcan limped. Plutarch is amusing. So is Rev. Weems. Franklin cracked jokes. Lincoln's humor has entered into the texture of American history. Diogenes was funny. So were Peter the Great, John Smith, and Andrew Jackson. Two-thirds of the "screamers" published from time to time originate in the history class. The teacher should no more frown at these blunders than the Puritan should have scowled at the May-pole. When a student calls the Kaiser a "geyser," read his mistake to the class. Laughter clears the atmosphere and makes future blunders less frequent.

Without persons there is no history. Recent events both in Europe and in America show that the "captains and the kings" still direct, to a surprising extent, the destinies of nations. History makes us the intimates of these history-making men. Do you remember Twain's remarkable double who looked more like Mark than Mark did himself? It is somewhat similar with the men of the past. No one at any time ever knows them adequately. But we know Napoleon now better than he knew himself. Let us make the most of it.

I sympathize [says Chesterton] with the whitewashing of King John, merely because it is a protest against our waxwork style of history. Everybody is in a particular attitude, with particular moral attributes; Rufus is always hunting and Cœur-de-Lion always crusading; Henry VIII always marrying, and Charles I always having his head cut off; Alfred rapidly and in rotation making his people's clocks and spoiling their cakes; and King John pulling out Jews' teeth with the celerity and industry of an American dentist. Anything is good that shakes all this stiff simplification, and makes us remember that these men were once alive; that is, mixed, free, flippant, and inconsistent. It gives the mind a healthy kick to know that Alfred had fits, that Charles I prevented enclosures, that Rufus was really interested in architecture, that Henry VIII was really interested in theology.

In dealing with Washington,

Down with the wig  
And the mask of the prig!  
Do what they can to smooth and conceal it,  
They're forced to reveal it—  
He was a *man*!

Read to the class Washington's account of the assaults of the Jersey mosquitoes and his contract with his gardener stipulating that the latter should get drunk at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. Many pictures are available of Luther, Napoleon, Washington, and Lincoln. These show interesting variations and are a fascinating study in themselves.

Nothing visualizes history like pictures. As to their use, practice varies. Some should be thrown on the screen, some passed around in class, some arranged in a historical laboratory for careful study. Many lines of progress can be effectively summarized in a projectoscope lecture. Take, for example, transportation. Of course, commerce, trade-routes, and sea-power have not been painted or photographed. They are abstract. We shall have to sketch them figuratively. As the old grammars used to say, we shall have to let the sign stand for the thing signified. After all, what is more significant of the rise of German commerce than the "Imperator" or the "Vaterland"? Pictures, such as I cite below, are easily secured: pictures of the Phoenician, Greek, and Roman galleys; a Venetian fisherman's boat; the "Santa Maria"; Armada boats; the "Half-Moon"; the "Mayflower"; seventeenth-century ships-of-the-line; Fitch's vertical-paddle steamboat; the "Clermont"; a river flat-boat; a canal barge; the "Savannah"; California clipper ships; a cross-section of the "Olympic"; the harbor of Hamburg; the "Vaterland." In turning to land commerce, we shall sketch first the history of roads, noting the Persian imperial road, the Roman roads, Napoleon's roads, the fearful English roads of the eighteenth century, Telford's and Macadam's systems, and the railroad. The world has used on these roads a variety of vehicles: the elephant, camel, dog, and horse; the sedan chair of the Orient, the sleigh of Russia, the classic chariot, the mediaeval two-wheeled wagon, the stage-coach, the prairie-schooner, the railroad car, the bicycle, and the automobile. The last three have each a characteristic and interesting development which can be shown pictorially. The evolution of the locomotive is illustrated similarly by pictures of Trevithick's early models, Hedley's "Puffing Billy" of 1804; Stephenson's "Rocket"; the "John Bull"; other locomotives of the grasshopper type; the mid-century funnel

stack; and the modern ten-drive-wheel giant. The development of aeronautics, weapons, communication, bookmaking, and agriculture can be illustrated in the same way. These pictured summaries should be used late in the course, during the semester review, perhaps. They show visibly the great fact of progress, and they inspire a state of mind that is optimistic, positive, and forward-looking.

As someone has pointed out, a cartoon is really a better likeness than a photograph. For the cartoon accentuates that which is individual, that which really distinguishes a man from his fellows. Moreover, a cartoon is, so to speak, a double exposure. It is a picture, not only of an individual, but of a public. Cartoons of Lincoln are not only biographical; they are historical. Nast and Tenniel were interpreters and positive forces.

Maps, it is needless to say, are indispensable. Apparently, a new science is slowly developing, the science of historical cartography; a science sorely needed to bring order out of confusion. Maps range from the blank outline wall-map, which is highly useful, to the expensive creation which is so cluttered with color, lines, and dots that it is useless. Maps taken from foreign railroad guides, and those "aeroplane" maps which appear in papers and magazines, and which show cities, roads, and physical features, are often decidedly worth filing. When my class was in the gloomy days of Phillip II, I exhibited a map of the Zuyder Zee, showing the latest reclamation project, and this, with the Dutch boast that "God made the world but the Dutch made Holland," was an effective introduction to the story of the sturdy little Netherlands. A map of the deer-parks in Scotland connected with the land reforms of Lloyd-George. Another suggestive map showed New England settlements east of the Mississippi; another, the migrations of Lincoln's ancestors. Plans of a few cities should also be at hand; for instance, Paris, London, Boston, Washington. Even ground-plans of buildings are often necessary, as of the Capitol and the White House.

Teachers should imitate the railroad guides and "Travel," and use maps and pictures in combination. For example, in presenting the Reform Bill of 1832 I used the following maps: a

map showing distribution of population in 1750; another showing distribution of population in 1830; another, a dotted borough map—which we called our “smallpox” map of England—showing the distribution of parliamentary members in 1830; and with these maps two pictures—one, a mediaeval sketch of Old Sarum, with its cathedral, streets, and walls, like the hub, spokes, and rim of a wheel; and the second, a photograph of the sheep-pastured, grassy moat of the nineteenth century. The pictures were cut from a booklet published by the Great Western Railroad of England. The maps were transferred from books to McKinley wall-maps. Maps and charts, to be clear and attractive, should be in color.

Teachers can often obtain useful charts from government publications. The last Bureau of Immigration report contains charts in color, representing in a striking manner the history of immigration since 1800. A chart, like an advertisement, should not attempt to say too much. If you are showing railroad construction since 1830, you may put in heavy lines to emphasize the panic years, but do not attempt also to show the rise and fall of imports and exports, public land sales, and gold production.

In the teaching of contemporary history, the opinions of newspapers and statesmen in other countries should be taken into account. A Japanese jingo's comments on California, a Mexican newspaper's criticism of Wilson, a South American view of the Monroe Doctrine, a French editorial on Alsace-Lorraine, an English observation on the German emperor, the various countries' apologies for the war—these things show that the world is moved, not by the truth, but by individual and mass conceptions which often are very far from the truth. It may be that “Truth crushed to earth shall rise again”; but it usually rises about a century later in some university professor's study. It is important to understand the point of view of peoples—their bias, prejudice, and ignorance. More than one despot has deliberately poisoned the public mind. “Louis XVI was a peaceable and gentle monarch who in the course of his long reign showed himself particularly skilful in finding expert ministers of finance. Loved and honored by his people, the aged monarch died suddenly after a glorious reign, as the result of a fit of apoplexy.” The above, you say, is

not history. Nevertheless, it is history as taught in Russia. It is as necessary, it seems to me, to develop in students a critical attitude toward the newspapers and books of today as toward the letters and memoirs of the past. The city editor is to be depended upon no more than Bismarck.

The history teacher, in hastening toward his goal, sometimes forgets that much of history is literature; that, in any event, history and literature supplement and clarify each other. The historian interprets the past and often incidentally contributes to literature; the literary man interprets the present and often incidentally contributes to history-making events. Milton defended the Puritan Revolution; Wells and Doyle are Britain's apologists in 1914. Shakespeare mirrored the proud spirit of "this England" which

never did, nor never shall,  
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.

Byron trod reflectively the soil of Waterloo and the Forum, Tennyson sang of Balaklava, Kipling of the "lands beyond the seas." Many are the opportunities in the history class for the exercise of literary appreciation. The Declaration of Independence, the utterances of Lincoln, Wilson's state papers should be accorded a comment or a question to suggest their worth. The President's revision of Eliot's epigraphs for the new post-office building are better examples than the rhetoric text can show of the way good English is written. Speeches like Secretary Lane's Flag-Day address should not be ignored simply because they are recent. The history teacher might also, at the proper time, remind the class that Lowell, Irving, Hawthorne, and Motley were in the diplomatic service, and that we have several men of letters abroad now.

As in literature, so in art. History, with its record of all "that man has ever done, or thought, or hoped, or felt," has a universal appeal to human feeling, and instinctively seeks emotional expression. Sculpture and painting have caught and preserved the pageant of the past as well as the feelings of the men of the past. Greek history, especially, should contribute to artistic appreciation.



We meet Phidias through his friend Pericles. We learn to know Vandyke through the courtly Charles I. We meet Houdon in the turmoil of the French Revolution. One who knows Lincoln must know also St. Gaudens, French, and Borglum.

Let us not, by over-systematizing, dehumanize the teaching of history. Change places with the students, not only in your mind, but actually in the classroom. Let them ask questions. Once or twice during the year, write out a 40 per cent examination paper. Hand copies to the class. Have them criticize and grade it. Let them "spell down" with short questions. Let them "play" Parliament and debate the Reform Bill.

History is a mosaic, rather than a geometrical, figure. It is "not a burdening of the memory, but an illumination of the soul." It is taught, in my opinion, most successfully, not by cut-and-dried formulas, but by intercourse which is natural, varied, vivid, and allusive.

Of course, history teaching is not vaudeville. Whether entertained or bored, the class must work hard. The teacher may dress the facts, but he must not disguise them. For, after all, truth is stranger than fiction; and it is also more valuable.